

Letchworth, Hitchin & District  
Branch



**RAFA GEN**

**'E'**

**SUMMER  
2017**

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 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCES  
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

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# RAFAGEN



*The official newsletter of the  
Letchworth & District Branch of  
the Royal Air Forces' Association*

The charity that supports the RAF family

## **ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OFFICIALS**

*President: Gordon Collinson*

*Vice President : Dennis Dawson*

*Chairman: Ernie Brown*

*Vice Chairman: Roy Newbury*

*Hon. Secretary: Ken Needham*

*Hon. Treasurer: Ken Needham*

*Committee:*

*John Airey, Lisa Berry*

*Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Warrant Officer Shaun Griffin*

*RAFGEN Edited by Ken Needham*

*Branch Welfare Officer: Tony Bearpark*

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*Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at  
the Conservative Club, Birds Hill, Letchworth Garden City,  
Hertfordshire, at 20.00 hrs Guests are welcome*

**Supporting something special**

## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT



At a recent Committee meeting it was decided that we should try again to see if we can get a second Standard Bearer. Training will be arranged if required. The Branch secretary is waiting for your call.

From now until the end of September, our Wings Appeal Coordinator, Roy Newbury, will be organising collection events all over the district. As soon as the list of Wings Appeal events are completed they will appear here in RAFAGEN, Facebook and on our web site. I would like **you** to be involved by giving just an hour of your time at an event, Roy and the Association would be pleased to hear from you. If you are interested, pass your name and contact details to our Branch secretary, and he will ensure that you are kept informed of all events. Your help really would be appreciated.

The Committee is still short of General Committee members. A strong Committee means a strong Branch. If you would like to sit on the Committee, it is not too late for you to be co-opted. If you are interested the Branch secretary is the person to contact.

Don't forget that it is ARMED FORCES DAY on 24<sup>th</sup> June, and up and down the Country towns and cities will be holding events to say 'thank you' to service men and women, past and present, for the work they have done and are doing.

Such an event is being held in Letchworth Garden City, but check the Armed Forces Day web site to find an event near you.



**A CHANCE TO PAUSE A MINUTE IN QUIET  
CONTEMPLATION FOR OUR FRIENDS AND  
COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE RECENTLY  
PASSED AWAY**



It is with deep regret the we have to announce the passing of member Cyril Gray on Wednesday April 19<sup>th</sup>. It is understood that Cyril had spent the previous day with his family.

Cyril was an active member of the Branch, attending most meetings, and always sitting at the side of the stage . He always had a smile, and ready to have a chat with members. It was Cyril who introduced our Branch to the Henlow Branch of the Royal Naval Association (Now no longer in existence) and we had regular exchange of social evenings.

Cyril will always be remembered for the work he did for Wings Appeal. Each September, for as long ago as anyone can remember, he stood, and in later years sat, outside the Co-op store in Stotfold with his collecting tins. Every year the tins became heavier, and last year he asked Roy for extra tins and merchandise, collecting the sum of just, and only just, under £900. (77p under to be exact). For this achievement he was this year awarded the John Stoddard Trophy, the first time this award had been presented.

Members who attended the funeral said that not only was our Branch standard present the Standards and flags of The Royal Naval Association and the Royal British Legion were also present.

Cyril, you will be sadly missed by your fellow members.

# BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

BY

OUR OWN BRANCH CORRESPONDENT

I have a theory about Annual General Meetings. Not just R.A.F.A. meetings, but all clubs or society AGM's. Members do not turn up as they should, because they are afraid they they will get cajoled into a seat at the top table. A quick count up at our meeting was about 20 plus members present.

The meeting was as it always is, brief. This year was a little different as we had an election for Chairman. Ernie Brown and Lisa Berry stood head to head for the seat.

The outcome being that Ernie continues to hold the post. All the other officers were elected unopposed. Roy Newbury remains Vice Chairman. Ken Needham continues as Secretary and Treasurer. (He will never loose those posts no matter how much he would like to), Lisa Berry and John Airey continue on the Committee as General Members. All the members present wanted Gordon Collinson to continue as President of the Branch and Dennis Dawson as Vice Chairman, so they didn't get a say.

There are minor jobs that the Committee also have, (because it appears that nobody else wants them) they are as follows:-

## **WINGS APPEAL COORDINATOR**

Roy Newbury

(This is the most important position in the Branch in my opinion)

Membership Secretary	Roy Newbury
Standard Bearer	Roy Newbury
Public Relation Officer	Shaun Griffin
Data Processor	Ken Needham
Newsletter Editor	Ken Needham
Web Site/Social Media Administrator	Shaun Griffin
Annual Conference Delegate	Shaun Griffin
Area Conference Delegate	John Airey

One other important person in the Branch is our Welfare Officer. This position is an appointment from Head Office, and our Welfare Office is Tony Bearpark. Full details on how to contact him is on page 2 of RAFAGEN.



At the beginning of 2017 the Branch received a bequest of £100 from the late John Stoddard, (member and Branch Padre) with instruction that it was for Branch use. The Committee decided to make a 'John Stoddard Trophy' which would be presented to the member who YOU thought had been most active in the Branch success over the previous year. As this was the first time the trophy was presented the Committee chose this time, but in the future it will be YOU. The trophy will be able to sit on the mantelpiece for 12 months, then you have to hand it back. We weren't told if you had to keep it clean. After Ken Needham had explained about the trophy, he handed over to Roy Newbury to

make the announcement. And, as Roy put it, "The winner is .....Drum Roll ..... **Cyril Gray**". This was because of his work for the 2016 Wings Appeal. As previously reported Cyril collected just, and only just, under £900. This was achieved by standing ( or as the photo above shows, sits) outside the Co-op Store in Stotfold. The fantastic amount just goes to show how generous the people of Stotfold are.

After we had all sampled the grand display of food, kind permission of the Conservative Club in particular 'Annie', we were introduced to Fire Officer, Tony Smith.

I for one thought we were going to be lectured about keeping safe in the home, how wrong can one be. If you think that all firefighters of today do, is to drive around in a big red lorry, and occasionally put out fires, you are so wrong. The question should be what don't firefighters do to help the local community.

The editor of RAFAGEN has asked me to keep my article to two pages, so I can't list the duties of a modern fire fighter in Hertfordshire or I would get into trouble. I will say that I heard Ken Needham being told that Tony would like to come back and bring with him a 'Fire Dog' and handler, and as we all like to see working dogs, (R.A.F Police Dog Buster for example). I think Tony will be coming back in the future. This time I suggest that you don't miss the event. Watch your RAFAGEN for details.

A Nony-Mouse (RAFAGEN Reporter)

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## A DAY OUT FOR THREE COMMITTEE MEMBERS



What could be better than sitting in the Officers Mess, with beverage to hand, talking to to a serving Warrant Officer. That is what happened when Lisa Berry, Roy Newbury and Ken Needham visited the military establishment at JITC Chicksands. The picture above shows Roy Newbury (left) with Ken Needham, having an enjoyable conversation with Warrant Officer Michelle Smith. Officers of the Branch were invited to this first meeting, Chicksands are hoping that they can take over from R.A.F. Henlow when it closes in a couple of years. If this was a sample of their hospitality, then all that can be said is that we are in for some very good hospitality.

Cpl Jo. Smith and W.O. Michelle Smith put the whole thing together with typical R.A.F precision. First of all we went on a guided tour of the museum. This museum is like no other I have seen at R.A.F. stations. It is a collection of the aerial recognisance photographs taken during the two world wars. How they were taken and re-produced in 3D to enable the technicians on the ground to translate what was happening in enemy territory.- Fascinating.

On to the Officer's Mess to hear what Chicksands are hoping to do for the local Branches of R.A.F.A.. Then a chat to serving personnel over a drink, and then a tour of the Officer's Mess, which in days gone by was a Priory, with a lot of history.

The following page shows a group photograph of all representatives from Branches at Bedford, St Neots, Dunstable and of course ours. .Roy had to leave early, but can you spot Ken and Lisa?



### THE ROYAL DRIVING LICENCE

I received this note the other day from one John King, whom I spent time with in the R.A.F. Police at R.A.F. Negombo, Ceylon.

*The other day jogged my dormant grey cells of my first Ceylon licence. (1957) Having just got married Peg and I decided it would be good idea to buy a car instead of cycling everywhere. I purchased an old Lanchester, it was a large car with a pre-selector gear box. The problem was I only had an R.A.F. driving licence but having made friends with a local Singhalese family with three brothers one of them being a local government officer in Negombo I asked if he could arrange for me to get a Ceylon licence. A couple of days later I met him at his office in Negombo and after a cup of tea, told me go outside and read one of a car registration plate, which I did. He then made out the licence, which I believe had a red cover, and said that I was now able to drive on the countries roads. I was surprised that he never attempted to see how well I was able to drive, but I suppose that because I drove R.A.F. Police vehicles that it was alright. When I opened the licence there on the first page was my particulars, on the first line was written John and underneath was King of Negombo. I always wondered what the reactions of the local constabulary would have been if they had stopped me and asked for my licence. Sadly over the years the licence has been mislaid.*

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# R.A.F. REGIMENT CENTRE AT R.A.F. HONINGTON

Celebrating the R.A.F. Regiment's history at the  
R.A.F. Honington Heritage Centre

**BRANCH VISIT PLANNED  
FOR 17th OCTOBER 2017**

**COST**

**£15 - MEMBERS**

**£17.50 - NON MEMBERS**



All members interested in going on this visit should add their name to the list as soon as possible by contacting the Branch Secretary. (Details inside the front cover) Numbers are limited to 12 so be quick.



Some definitions from the radio programme  
**I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue.**  
**The Alternate Dictionary**

ACOUSTIC	A Scottish cattle prod.
ALLOCATE	How you greet the Duchess of Cambridge
BARRIER	Even more like Barry than Barry is
BIOLOGY	The science of why women shop
CARDIAC	Someone who knows a hell of a lot about cardigans
CESSPIT	Brad's unsavoury brother
CORRIDOR	Entrance to the Rover's Return
DACE	What the Queen uses to play board games
DECAF	Where you get de coffee
EGOCENTRIC	The yolk
FLIRT	A vehicle driven by a Geordie milkman
FOREBEARS	A really terrible night for Goldilocks
GERIATRIC	Three goals scored by Germans
LEICESTERSHIRE	Why shearers like small sheep
MACE	What the Queen puts traps down for
ONESIE	What the Queen calls a selfie
PEAR TREE	What posh poets like to write
PETULANCE	A vehicle that takes dogs and cats to hospital
QUICK	Noise made by a New Zealand duck
SNUFFBOX	A coffin

Extract form the "Bilge Rat" the journal of the No 4 Area, Royal Navy Association @ Liskeard. Sep 2016.

Posted by Roy Newbury

Right  
The BBC Quiz Programme team



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*Get your diaries out, because our R.A.F.A.L.O. W/O Shaun Griffin has been busy ensuring that our Branch Social evenings are entertaining.*

*Please note that speakers may change at short notice due to circumstances, especially those members of the Armed Forces.*

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 8 Jun 17   | Gary Fisher - The Magna Carter.  |
| 13 July 17 | Vicky from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation..  |
| 10 Aug 17  | Andy Gibbs - Bringing Dead Street to life - Hitchin British Schools.   |
| 14 Sept 17 | Stephen Barnard - WWI recruitment posters.   |
| 12 Oct 17  | Station Commander R.A.F. Henlow and Wing Commander Mark Cluic will visit the Branch along with the Station Warrant Officer.                    |
| 17 Oct 17  | <b>Branch visit to R.A.F. Regiment Heritage Centre at R.A.F. Honington.</b>  |
| 9 Nov 17   | R.A.F. Warrant Officer Michelle Smith talks about her career and her current role as a Wing Warrant Officer specialising in foreign languages. |
| 14 Dec 17  | Branch Christmas Bash. Venue to be confirmed.  |

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 11 Jan 18 | Sqn Ldr Eddie Wynn "Chaplaincy in the R.A.F. of today"   |
| 8 Feb 18  | Alistair Hodgson - The de Havilland Mosquito production at Salisbury Hall London Colney Herts. |
| 8 Mar 18  | <b>AGM with speaker Mark Pardoe on Hitchin Pubs and names..</b>                                |

**1 April 18 - 100 Year Anniversary of the Royal Air Force.**

- 12 Apr 18      **THE BRANCH IS TO CELEBRATE THE CENTENARY OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE**
- 19 Apr 18      **Branch Visit TBC.**
- 10 May 18      Amy Packard - Dementia Friends Update
- 14 Jun 18      Sam Mason on the History of British Schools
- 12 Jul 18      Ken Griffin - Letchworth Convicts and Gallows Hill
- 9 Aug 18      Paul Jiggins - Welwyn Brewery
- 13 Sept 18     Stephen Barnard - WWI propaganda in music.
- 11 Oct 18      Stephen Barnard - Fire Investigation Dog Handler.
- 18 Oct 18      **Branch visit TBC**
- 8 Nov 18 -     Dr Rudi Newman - Imperial Airship Scheme 1924 -30
- 13 Dec 18      Branch Christmas Bash. Venue to be confirmed

There must be something there that has wetted your appetite.  
2018 Diaries will be on sale from October 2017.




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# LETCHWORTH PAR 3 FAMILY GOLF CENTRE

Whether you are young or old, our course provides a wonderful golf venue for you to enjoy a round of golf with family or friends. The course is set in a beautiful location and enables you to experience all aspects of the game of golf except for driving.

Our prices are very reasonable and include the hire of both clubs and balls.



## DIMPLES Coffee Lounge & Cafe

Enjoy panoramic views over the golf course in Dimples, the coffee lounge & cafe located in our clubhouse. We offer a wide range of coffees, teas, milkshakes, soft drinks, cakes, hot & cold food and snacks. We also have a fully licensed bar. You don't need to play golf or be a member in order to enjoy our clubhouse.

We support the RAF Association and Wings Appeal.

William Way  
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Hertfordshire SG6 2HJ  
Tel: 01462 483863  
Email: [info@letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk](mailto:info@letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk)  
Web: [www.letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk](http://www.letchworthfamilygolf.co.uk)

# R.A.F. WEST KIRBY

Ken Needham

A few weeks ago a couple of us ex R.A.F. Chaps talked, over a very nice lunch, about their time at R.A.F. West Kirby. In the 1950's this was one of the Basic training stations for raw recruits, both National Service and regular servicemen.

Although four years apart on our time on the camp, Charles Temple and I, both had the same memories. "A shock to the system"



We both remember that first morning which I think is best reported from an article I found on the world wide web. "I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow, and it seemed no time at all before the door opened with a crash and a Corporal stamped in yelling 'OK LADS! HANDS OFF YOUR COCKS AND SOCKS ON. GET UP YOU IDLE AIRMEN. **GET UP.** YOU'RE NOT AT HOME NOW AND I'M NOT YOUR MOTHER.'" Words that I am sure rang out in the ears of all airmen who joined the force in the 1950's.

Charles had the pleasure of being on camp in 1952, and told me that he did an extra 2 weeks due to the Coronation. I'll bet that went down well.

In the four years between our visits, the camp had progressed. During Charles' time they just had hut letters, against when I arrived there was four squadrons. Charles was 'B' Flight whilst I was in Smutts Squadron. We had a yellow disc behind the beret badge. No recognition for Charles, as I don't think there was so many of them.

"Despite all this racket," the web site story goes on, "one or two failed to stir sufficiently so he lifted the end of their beds about eighteen inches and allowed



them to drop, shouting 'IF YOU DON'T WANT MY BOOT UP YOUR ARSE, GET OUT **NOW**.'" All this was a different type of morning activity for both of us, and I for one was beginning to wish I had never signed on. Charles was National Service so he had no choice, but I was a regular, so I had only myself to blame. One thing I forgot to mention all this took place at around 06.00 hrs, a time we didn't know existed.

We both remembered with fondness the pot bellied stoves in the billet, but as Charles was on camp during the summer they weren't used, but whilst I was on camp, we used to get them glowing red. Also useful for melting boot polish for boot cleaning.

With the reminiscing that Charles and I had over lunch, brought to mind a story of whilst I was helping on a stall on Hitchin market with R.A.F. Henlow. A gentleman came to the stall and said that he was a DI at Kirby in the 1950's. I mentioned that I was a recruit there at that time, and we started to reminisce. Standing along side was a serving airman, who said after listening to us old airman's stories said, "I have heard those stories before, but until now have always thought them to be old wives tales of ex airman trying to say that it was harder in the old days". Both together the DI and I said "Believe it Boy believe it".

May I thank Charles for a very pleasant lunch and some good conversation.



Group photo of the hut that Charles was with. I know you are there somewhere Charles, but I forget to make a note, and features change after 60 years. Below is my obligatory camp photo. I am marked. Not proud of the hat though.



If you were one who had the pleasure of attending R.A.F. West Kirby and would like to read the full story of one airman's story of his stay, it can be found on [www.ventnorradar.co.uk/WK02.htm](http://www.ventnorradar.co.uk/WK02.htm) it is a good read and will bring back many memories.